

Graveyards are windows to the local soul

By GARY A. WARNER
Orange County Register

With their rain-etched marble monuments and sad laments for long-lost loves, graveyards are an intriguing window for explorers into the local soul.

It might seem a bit ghoulish to include acres of dead people on a vacation itinerary. But for students of history and culture, graveyards are rich repositories. How the dead are remembered says much about the living.

Here are a few of the more intriguing cemeteries I've found in my treks around the country and the world:

LONDON

Communism may be dying and its progenitor is long dead, dead, dead. Karl Marx's tomb in Highgate Cemetery is marked by a huge bust of the brooding author of "Das Kapital." Also, check out the Egyptian Avenue with its long row of obelisks over catacombs below. Nearby Hampstead Heath is one of the loveliest places to walk in all the city.

PARIS

Leafy, quiet Le Pere Lachaise cemetery houses dozens of famous dead. Moliere, Honore de Balzac, Marcel Proust, Oscar Wilde, and

Frederic Chopin are among the greats sprinkled among its 105 acres. The most popular draw is the graffiti-slathered grave of former Doors front man Jim Morrison. Hurry, his family is considering bringing his body back to the United States.

ROME

One of the spookiest sights in all of Europe is Santa Maria dell'Orazione e della Morte on the Via Giulia in Rome. Skulls and bones of dead monks are displayed in an ornate vault, meant by the Catholic brothers to be an objtality.

"As you are, we once were; as we are, you will be" is etched in the wall.

IRELAND

The Emerald Isle is famous for its brooding, crumbling graveyards overgrown with high grass. The most atmospheric of Eire's cemetery collection is Monasterboice in County Louth. Since the fifth century, monks and nuns have been buried here, next to the ruins of two churches, a round tower and three massive Celtic crosses. Muiredach's Cross, erected in the 10th century, is among the great treasures of Ireland.

LOS ANGELES

Faux medieval church. Faux Greek temple. Faux Michelange-

lo's David. Everything is a fake at Forest Lawn, the cemetery-cum-tourist attraction in Glendale. Except it's the only place you can find the real Clark Gable, W.C. Fields and Jean Harlow. They're among the famous and obscure Hollywood talents buried among the peaceful hills.

SAN FRANCISCO

The beautiful Presidio is best known as the former home of the Sixth Army. But in a small corner of the vast forested base are tiny flower-strewn gravestones that mark the final resting places of many San Franciscans' beloved dogs and cats. The often-whimsical collection is tough to find, so ask for directions at the visitors center.

NEW ORLEANS

Marble and granite skyscrapers mark the burial grounds of the elite of the Big Easy. Living below sea level makes subterranean graves a watery no-no. The result is quirky collections of obelisks and slabs meant to immortalize the colorful, corrupt and now-forgotten citizens of the city.

Crime and tall fences have made many graveyards unsafe. Lafayette Cemetery on Prytania Street in the Garden District is one of the better choices. Check with Save Our

Cemeteries, (504) 588-9357, to see whether any are hosting an "open house" during your visit.

NEW YORK

Queens is called the "Borough of Graves" for its many cemeteries — but the most intriguing cemetery in town is in lower Manhattan. Trinity Church's graveyard at Broadway and Wall Street dates to 1776. Alexander Hamilton, of \$10-bill and Aaron Burr-duel fame, and steamboat inventor Robert Fulton are among those buried here.

BOSTON

The King's Chapel and Granary graveyards are impressive pieces of history, but the city's most interesting graveyard is Copp's Hill Burying Ground in the North End. Not only does it have the last remains of noted Colonial killjoy Cotton Mather, the pre-Revolutionary enforcer of morality, but it also was used by the Redcoats for artillery during the Battle of Bunker Hill.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Across the Potomac River from the nation's capital is Arlington Cemetery, with more than 200,000 Americans — the great, the forgotten and the unknown.

During the Civil War, the

Union Army captured the home of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee and converted it into a graveyard. It is the site of the Tomb of the Unknown Servicemen, as well as the tombs of President Kennedy, FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, band leader John Philip Sousa, boxer Joe Lewis, mystery writer Dashiell Hammett, and Nazi scientist-turned-American scientist Wernher von Braun.

BALTIMORE

The small cemetery at the corner of Greene and Fayette streets looks like something out of a spooky Edgar Allen Poe story. So no surprise that the gloomy author lies here, under a tombstone with a carved raven and a single word: "Nevermore."

BARRE, VT.

Perhaps the oddest graveyard in all of the United States, the Hope Cemetery features delicately carved headstones, including representations of a soccer ball and a stock car. There also are lifelike flowers, giggling cherubs, and intertwined lovers.

The carvings are the work of local artisans using rock from the nearby Rock of Ages quarry to fashion stone epitaphs for granite workers and other townspeople.

Courier travel offers world on shoestring

The off-season months of fall, winter and early spring are the best times to get rock-bottom fares to Europe, Latin America and the Orient if you're willing to fly as an air courier.

So says William C. Bates, president of the International Association of Air Travel Couriers.

"Courier travel is the cheapest way to see the world on a shoestring, and that's never more true than during the fall, winter and early months of spring," Bates said.

"Round-trip courier tickets to Europe from New York can go for \$100 to \$150 at the last minute," he said.

Bates said since early September, he has seen round-trip flights to the Orient from California, Chicago and New York range between \$200 to \$250 on a regular basis.

Flights from Miami to South America have been as cheap as \$100 to \$150 round trip.

"If you're on a tight budget and want to see the world, this is the best time to fly," he said.

The association, based in Lake Worth, Florida, monitors some 60 air courier firms worldwide that

the U.S. — such as to Europe, Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean."

The association estimates approximately 35,000 to 40,000 courier flights take off from the United States to foreign destinations each year.

"Some people will fly to Hong Kong, for example, and then pick up another courier flight from

provide the best opportunity for super discounted air fares, Bates said. Flights are generally cheaper the closer it is to take-off.

"We post last-minute updates twice daily here in our offices," Bates said.

"Couriers can call in daily to find out where the cheapest flights are headed, or they can ring up a special fax or computer

the major international gateway cities of New York, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

"We have members in all 50 states and in more than 50 foreign countries," Bates said. In each case, they're required to get to the departure city at their own expense.

Bates said a common misconception that pops up in people's minds is the picture of a courier traveling to Hong Kong with an attache case filled with diamonds handcuffed to his wrist.

"The general public is almost never entrusted with valuables," Bates said.

The objects couriers accompany are usually pretty boring — canceled checks, mail, overnight letters, replacement parts for broken machinery, etc.

"But the items are important all the same. In today's fast-paced environment, companies can't afford to have parts or merchandise sit idle for a week — or even hours — in customs. The courier carries the manifest, which helps the materials clear customs immediately."

You give up a little; they give you a deal

By JAY CLARKE
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Joe Pita has got the courier bit down to a science. With 10 days off a couple years ago, the Miami man arranged a round-trip courier assignment from Los Angeles to Hong Kong. His cost, \$395.

He used frequent flier miles for the Miami-Los Angeles round-trip, so that part of his trip was free.

That's really cheap for a trip

to make such a convoluted trip in so short a period, but courier flights can get you to a destination less expensively than regular airlines. But they do have restrictions.

For one, you can't take anything but carry-on luggage, because part of the deal is that you give up your checked baggage space to the courier company. For another, the timing of your return — usually a week — is dictated by the

Budget accommodations are available

By JEAN ALLEN
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Q. You recently wrote about budget accommodations in London. We anticipate going to France or Italy this year. Do you know any agency we might call for a copy of a similar brochure for senior citizens on a budget there? — A.C., Boca Raton, Fla.

Q. My husband and I are planning a trip to Europe. We are going to the Highlands of Scotland, England (London) and Paris. We have never been to Paris and would be interested in any information you have such as sights, hotels and the train that goes from London to Paris. — D.H., Boca Raton, Fla.

A. I kept these letters in mind when I was in Paris last month, and spotted many one- to three-star hotels at around \$80-\$100 a night as I rode around the city on boat buses and subways, always money-saving rates. Paris this year has more bargains than usual.

First, there's the carnet, a strip of 10 tickets good for the Metro (subway) and buses, for 44 francs (about 80 cents a ride; a one-ride ticket is \$1.50).